

ABSTRACT

Systems and methods for distributing products using a wide area or global computer network are provided. A method for distributing products is provided wherein a request for a product is received from a consumer, preferably using a web based interface. An indirect seller provides the web based interface and preferably maintains the inventory management system. A retailer to fulfill the consumer request for product is determined based upon the nearest retailer to the consumer that has current stock of the requested. Inventory levels of product are maintained by an inventory management system that receives shipping information from manufacturers regarding shipments of products from the manufacturers to retailers and sales information from retailers reflecting sales of products from the retailers to consumers. A terminal may also be provided at retail locations to enable users of the terminal to interact with the inventory management system while at a physical retail location. The inventory management system reconciles the shipment and sales information to provide an accurate accounting of quantities of products actually sold to consumers and to provide an accurate accounting to the manufacturers of inventory levels at the retailers. The inventory management system is further capable of processing payment information from consumers, retailers, and factors in order to provide funds to manufacturers in an expeditious manner. The inventory management system preferably is maintained and operated from a server remotely located from the consumers.